

Message Text

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20

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /138 W

----- 021382

R 171021Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6687

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL POZNAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 5963

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, VT, PL, US

SUBJECT: OLSZOWSKI'S VATICAN VISIT

REF: ROME 12573

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER OLSZOWSKI'S MEETING WITH POPE PAUL VI REPRESENTS A DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE OF POSSIBLY FAR-REACHING SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POLAND AND FOR POLAND'S RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN POLONIA, AS WELL. THE POLISH EPISCOPATE GREETES THIS DEVELOPMENT WITH MIXED FEELINGS, AND WILL SEEK TO CONTROL THE ACTION VIA THE VATICAN SO AS TO ADVANCE ITS OWN CAUSE VIS-A-VIS THE POLISH GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE POLISH CENTRAL PRESS HAS HANDLED OLSZOWSKI'S VATICAN VISIT SOMEWHAT GINGERLY. THE STATEMENT ISSUED FOLLOWING HIS PAPAL AUDIENCE ON NOVEMBER 12 WAS CARRIED IN THE NEXT DAY'S EDITIONS, BUT CERTAIN PASSAGES RELATING TO THE POLISH CHURCH WERE INITIALLY OMITTED FROM THE PARTY ORGAN TRYBUNA LUDU. THE FOLLOWING DAY, HOWEVER, TRYBUNA LUDU CARRIED AS ITS FIRST EDITORIAL COMMENT ON OLSZOWSKI'S VISIT TO ITALY A COMMENTARY ON THE VATICAN

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PORTION OF THE TRIP WHICH CALLED IT AN "IMPORTANT EVENT"

IN POLISH RELATIONS WITH THE HOLY SEE AND CONCLUDED THAT THE BASIS HAS BEEN CREATED FOR FURTHER PROGRESS. THOUGH INCLUDING THE PREVIOUSLY OMITTED PASSAGES REGARDING THE POLISH CHURCH, THE COMMENTARY PLACED MAJOR EMPHASIS ON OVERALL RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN AS A STEP FURTHER CONSOLIDATING DETENTE. SLOWO POWSZECHNE'S ROME CORRESPONDENT'S REPORT OF ITALIAN PRESS REACTION APPEARING ON NOV 15 STRESSED THE HISTORIC IMPORTANCE AND CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE VATICAN TALKS AS SIGNS OF MOVEMENT TOWARD POSSIBLE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

3. AN OFFICIAL OF CARDINAL WYSZYNSKI'S OFFICE HERE, IN A PRELIMINARY REACTION, HAS STRESSED TO US THE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF OLSZOWSKI'S VISIT AND PROSPECTS FOR NORMALIZATION OF WARSAW-VATICAN TIES. MENTIONING THAT AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE VATICAN AND HUNGARY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAD BEEN FOLLOWED ONLY BY A WORSENING OF THE CHURCH'S SITUATION IN THOSE TWO COUNTRIES, THE OFFICIAL INDICATED HE SAW NO NEED FOR HASTE IN SCHEDULING ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI'S RETURN VISIT TO POLAND. ADDITIONALLY, A WELL-CONNECTED, POLISH-AMERICAN CATHOLIC PRELATE VISITING HERE TELLS US THAT THE POLISH EPISCOPATE HAS MADE ITS POSITION CLEAR TO THE VATICAN AND IS CERTAIN THE LATTER WILL DO NOTHING WITHOUT CARDINAL WYSZYNSKI'S APPROVAL. THE CARDINAL WILL REPORTEDLY MEET WITH THE POPE ON NOV 19, AND BISHOP DABROWSKI WILL REMAIN IN ROME FOR THIS VISIT, WE UNDERSTAND.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE MOMENTUM IN VATICAN-WARSAW RELATIONS MAY BE DEVELOPING FASTER THAN EXPECTED. ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT, RETIRED PRIESTS LIVING IN THE PAPAL NUNCIO'S RESIDENCE HERE HAVE BEEN ALERTED TO THE POSSIBLE NEED FOR THEM TO VACATE THE PREMISES, PRESUMABLY SO IT CAN BE READIED FOR VATICAN REPRESENTATIVES. MOREOVER, A POLISH OFFICIAL ASSOCIATED WITH POLONIA AFFAIRS HAS EXPRESSED HIS EXPECTATIONS OF AN EVENTUAL PAPAL VISIT TO POLAND.

5. COMMENT: IN THE VIEW OF THE POLISH CHURCH, AN "NORMALIZATION" OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN MUST BE LINKED TO

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ENHANCEMENT OF THE CHURCH'S STATUS IN POLAND, AND THE EPISCOPATE IS UNLIKELY TO APPROVE ESTABLISHMENT OF FORMAL RELATIONS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS IN THAT REGARD FROM THE REGIME. THERE IS A FURTHER LINKAGE IN THIS COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP IN THAT AMERICAN POLONIA WILL ALSO WATCH CLOSELY DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGIME'S RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH IN POLAND AND WITH THE VATICAN, AND POLONIA'S ASSESSMENT WILL DETERMINE HOW WELL DISPOSED IT WOULD BE

TO AN EVENTUAL GIEREK VISIT TO THE US. THE POLISH-
AMERICAN CHURCHMAN MENTIONED ABOVE SAYS HE POINTED OUT
THIS LINKAGE TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HE MET AND
WHO QUERIED HIM ON HOW AMERICAN POLONIA MIGHT RECEIVE
GIEREK. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH HERE HAS NOT YET
WORKED OUT ITS COMPLETE TACTICS ON THE REGIME'S OVERTURES
TO THE VATICAN, BUT, CLEARLY, IT WILL INTENSIFY ITS EFFORTS TO
INFLUENCE THE VATICAN'S MOVES WITH THE AIM OF TURNING THESE
OVERTURES TO ITS OWN ADVANTAGE.
DAVIES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL VISITS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973WARSAW05963
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: WARSAW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731127/aaaaathy.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: ROME 12573
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25-Sep-2001 by smithrj>; APPROVED <06 MAR 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OLSZOWSKI'S VATICAN VISIT
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, VT, PL, US, (OLSZOWSKI, STEFAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005